

Angela Lake - HB 4714

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Date: 6/8/2011 12:19 AM
Subject: HB 4714
Attachments: DSCF4360.JPG

Dear legislature,

I learned today of HB 4714 introduced by Representative Timothy Bledsoe. I oppose this bill which targets "pit bulls" because such breed specific legislation (BSL) simply doesn't work. Some examples of how BSL doesn't work include:

1. Breed specific legislation is expensive for communities to enforce. If such legislation should be enacted, Michigan tax payers will be forced to pay for the housing and destruction of "pit bulls." Michigan tax payers are also likely to incur legal fees by defending such laws and disputes over whether a dog meets the definition of "pit bull." A better option is legislation which seeks to prevent those with a history of irresponsible dog ownership from owning dogs in the future.
2. Because resources are diverted from educating the public on responsible dog ownership, there is a strong possibility that this bill will actually encourage irresponsible dog ownership and inadvertently endanger the safety of Michigan's citizens. A better option is legislation which seeks to enhance and strengthen existing laws which encourage responsible dog ownership.
3. As other communities with BSL have experienced, "pit bull" is extremely difficult to define. No two people, even when extremely experienced with "pit bulls", agree on whether a dog is a "pit bull." Michigan citizens may not even realize s/he owns a "pit bull" until the dog is confiscated and s/he faces potential jail time. A better option is to eliminate any reference to a specific breed in favor of stronger punishments for dogs that have a history of dangerous behavior.
4. "Pit bulls" receive a bad rap largely due to their use in illegal dog fighting rings. As other communities with "pit bull" bans have experienced, banning "pit bulls" only forces such illegal activity to seek other dog breeds which were not included in the legislation. A better option is to enhance and strengthen punishments for those individuals participating in illegal dog fighting. Additionally, removing breed reference in favor of legislation which provide stronger regulation of any dog exhibiting dangerous behavior.

I feel very passionately about opposing this legislation. I am a veteran animal shelter worker, an advocate for responsible dog ownership, and a proud "pit bull" owner of Bowser. Bowser is a Canine Good Citizen (CGC), a designation offered by the American Kennel Club. He earned this designation by demonstrating dog-appropriate reactions while performing such things as sitting politely for a stranger, coming when called, and walking through a crowd.

I have included a picture of Bowser, along with my 4-year old daughter and our Boxer, Kiya. (Yes, "pit bulls" can live quite happily and safely with other dogs.)

You may be inclined to write Bowser off as an exception to the "pit bull" stereotype, but I know many other "pit bulls" who are equally deserving of love and respect. BSL punishes these dogs with death while resources are diverted from busting and prosecuting illegal dog fighting and educating the public on responsible dog ownership.

Please publicly state your opposition to HB 4714.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Biedermann

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